

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Cadamstown** Ref: **547**
County: **Offaly** Mark: **275**
Category: **A** Date(s): **25/06/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	43
The Built Environment	50	33
Landscaping	50	39
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	32
Litter Control	50	39
Waste Minimisation	20	10
Tidiness	30	16
Residential Areas	40	25
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	30
General Impression	10	8
TOTAL MARK	400	275

Overall Development Approach:

Go raibh maith agaibh go leir! Thank you to all the voluntary workers who have gone to so much trouble this year and in previous years to make Cadamstown an ever improving place in which to live. You have an amazing membership, given the small size of your village. Because of this, you also probably have members who live in the surrounding countryside and who are interested in keeping their local focal point village in good order. This is always a good thing for any village or town. It is good that you welcome all members of the community to your meetings. It is good that you have help from Offaly County Council and from Offaly LEADER and FAS. You obviously have a good PR person who uses the local media and church networks. We hope that this extends not only to churches and that village residents may attend outside of the immediate village church itself. We are glad that you involve local schoolchildren, even though you do not have a local school in the actual village itself.

You are busy fundraising with good community events which utilise your lovely surrounds – barbeques and sponsored walks.

We are delighted to receive your five year plan for Cadamstown, commencing this year. However, we would respectfully suggest that you include a map based on the O.S. map for Cadamstown to enhance this Plan. We would also note that you clearly separate plans for this year and those for following years, and be careful to list works under appropriate headings. You can allow for cross referencing, but this needs to be clear. Some of the works listed only for this year, 2009 such as "Attend lawns, flowers beds, shrubs etc.," are surely on-going, but do not appear to be listed for the years following. But this can be clarified in a renewed and expanded plan in 2010.

Marks are awarded under this heading for the use of the Irish language. Remember this in future projects as you have done in signposting and at the monastic site interpretative panel.

We are also delighted to see the input of the Rural Social Scheme and of Shannon Development as acknowledged on site notices.

The Built Environment:

You have many small scale vernacular buildings in the village, some of which, particularly on the road behind the church ("the Back Road"), are in need of some care and attention. We are glad to see that you intend to repair and improve the appearance of old farm buildings between 2010 and 2014. Be sure to look for proper advice from the Architectural Conservation section of your local authority in this regard. For instance, dry stone walls should be retained as such where possible, and lime mortar should be used instead of cement in any old stone buildings, both from a visual and maintenance point-of-view.

The church is a lovely traditional pre Famine building, with its nice belfry; 1842 plaque and interesting cross slab and inserted head carving from the local monastic site of Saint Lughna or Luna, but internally the church may have some dampness problems. Again, it is very important to seek proper advice in carrying out any works to any historic building at any time. Its grounds are immaculately kept and are a credit to all concerned, and show off the building to its best advantage. The lovely side gate is traditional and the approach pathway from this gate to the front door is welcoming and in scale. Despite the fact that the shed beside the gate has a rather worn door, the entire effect is pleasing and in character. Dempsey's pub is interesting in that solid rock is evident in the front corner foundation area. A similar situation exists in a building in Portaferry, Co. Down. Unfortunately, the traditional window opes have, in the past, been replaced probably at the same time as the pub was extended. However, the "James Dempsey" lettering on the (main) roadside elevation is very attractive. The red barn and stone farm shed with whitewashed walls and red corrugated roof along this elevation is also attractive and should be maintained annually.

There is a lovely stone seat in the dry stone boundary wall along the main road, opposite and uphill of the pub. This is a very attractive feature and appears to be a traditional idea in other Offaly villages also. The stone slabs in the picnic area and on the Mill Walk lend themselves to some obvious interpretation for the visitor. This adjudicator also thinks that the visitor should be guided on the issue of the "new" imitation dolmen visible in the village vis-a-vis the genuine "Giant's Grave" signposted (4km)!

Generally, the houses in the village are well maintained.

Field gates on approaches to the village and internally in the village might be painted in a bright uniform colour, as at present they are rather lacklustre.

The mill is a wonderful piece of local architectural heritage to have in the centre of the village, and the stone bridge is another. The white building on the Kinnitty side of the river is a lovely structure on an important approach road.

This adjudicator visited the site at Litir Lughna, although outside the village proper. Perhaps, you could make a visit there more inviting to people visiting the village through some innovative information within existing signage. The visit sets Cadamstown in context.

Landscaping:

You have been involved in good landscaping for many years, and now the time has come to maintain this in perpetuity. You have a lot of natural vegetation and native trees in the local environment and you have added your own touches to this. There is no need to augment this natural planting with urban style plastic flowerpots. Nature, as you have inherited it and augmented it, is more than adequate landscaping. You have a very pretty village centre, but you should retain its rural ambience - full of appropriate native tree and shrub and wild flower plants. Your efforts in landscaping are bearing fruit in the beautiful mature riverside areas.

Your maintenance programme appears to be working well for all your landscaped areas.

Remember that it is an offence under the Wildlife Act 1976 and Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 to cut vegetation in a hedge or ditch or on lands not cultivated between the 1st March and 31st of August. This is for the protection of nesting birds. Try to get your trimming carried out in the early spring.

All areas by the river are a credit to public and private ownership, and the church grounds are particularly commendable. It was interesting to see allotment type gardens near the car park area. Thank you for the photographs.

On the Kinnitty side of the river the rambling roses around the white two storey building form a nice approach

feature. There was some lovely wild sweet pea in the hedge along the "Back Road" approach. The stone wall with prolific greenery and flowers of the single storey grey house, just on the Kinnitty side of the bridge, were wadmired.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Cadamstown is a very small rural village and the countryside is part of the environment of the place. You are lucky in this, as all the rural animals and plants will see no predators or unnatural boundaries through which they will not pass or grow. You justly state (under landscaping heading in your plan) that "the committee recognises the importance of preserving wildlife in the heart of the village", which you feel is in keeping with the character of a rural setting. The geological trail can also be utilised as a nature trail as you also point out. We are happy to see that you are proposing to maintain the trail and the "Offaly Way" in 2009 and onwards. You have a lot of information collected in the "Silver River" nature trail, and Eco Walk with a nice pictorial board with - inter alia - an attractive squirrel which must attract the younger generation to find out more about this lovely area. The loop walks from the Offaly Way also add to the choices available in this category. You are to be commended for sharing your place with others, and this applies in particular to those whose private property paths cross.

Litter Control:

There was virtually no litter in your village on adjudication day. Well Done! It would be good to hear about your regular clean up evenings. How often are they held? Have you been liaising with the Environment Section of Offaly County Council with regard to litter management in the longer term?

The Clothing and the Bring Banks were impeccable! The size of the bins is quite small in scale – almost domestic sizing and visually more appropriate to a small village. The bins must be emptied regularly, as there was no sign of overflow! Well done to all concerned! We note that from 2010 you intend to encourage the involvement of local schoolchildren. This is good.

Waste Minimisation:

Well done on initiating additional ways of recycling in the leaflet you circulated. It is a pity that you did not include a copy of that leaflet in your application. Composting was also addressed in that leaflet and it would be interesting to read what you included under this heading. Well done on following through the plan to produce such a leaflet which you included in last year's plans for 2009.

You might refer to the Race Against Waste booklet available from the TidyTowns Unit of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Perhaps, you could consider organising or attending a Waste Minimisation Workshop with your Local Authority – perhaps, in conjunction with neighbouring villages?

As a local community, you could look at some innovative and simple ideas such as organising a "Bring and Take Day". This would involve using a local hall / community centre for instance for a day - where everybody brings items they have no further use for, but which other people might want (and which under normal circumstances they might get rid of as waste), and puts them on display. The corollary is that somebody else needs these items. No monies change hands. Website versions of this idea have been set up in places also. Another group collected all broken crockery, and made a mosaic in their local area. You can gain marks by doing some of these things for 2010.

Tidiness:

Cadamstown is generally tidy, but there are certain things that jar a little. Firstly, despite best intentions to inform, the signage situation has got a little out-of-hand, insofar as there are too many signs which must be a little confusing for people. Would it be possible to amalgamate /rationalise signage? The result of this well intentioned interpretation and acknowledgment gives a fussy, cluttered look within the simplicity of location. Some of the older interpretative signs need cleaning.

The Silver River sign at the park wall is slightly bent; the road sign on the Kinnitty side of the bridge is "headless"; the car park finger post sign needs attention; the whitewashed walls beside the two storey building on the Kinnitty side could do with rewashing; the environs of, and the "yield" sign itself at this point could do with tidying up - as could the area at the foot of the steps leading to the river. These small issues become more significant in a small confined space which is the village, because of its intimate size and scale. The "community alert" sign on the Kinnitty side is in need of some care

Gravel from the parking area beside the pub finds its way onto the public road. Can the community find a

solution to this issue with the local engineer? The gravel looks well, but begins to look untidy scattered along the main road, and may also cause a skid hazard? The entire parking area is uncontrolled and broken up visually only by a circular local stone raised bed. The Silver River Welcome interpretative board both, within the car park and on the same board on the Kinnitty side of the bridge (with the aforementioned squirrel), are rusting along the edging. This was mentioned in last year's report also.

As already mentioned, the Clothing and the Bring Banks were impeccable. The picnic area itself was a model of tidiness.

The pump house near the picnic site could do with repainting and a renewed door. A cracked paving slab was also noted in this area. The fencing on the steps leading to the river at this area needs renewal both from a visual and safety point of view. The small pump needs "finishing off" and painting. Fencing and finishing off of the corner area of the adjacent car park could do with some attention

Residential Areas:

There are no purely residential areas in the village i.e. housing estates, and for this reason the village has preserved an integrity and mix, many would envy. Comments made in previous sections in relation to Landscaping and Tidiness in individual house are pertinent here also, where they refer to residential building e.g. boundary treatments, gates, gables etc. In general, the standard is good, but could be improved upon, particularly in the "Back Road" area. The Mill property area is especially well landscaped and maintained.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The approach from the Clonaslee side is very well cared for with a clean bilingual name sign, with nice hedging and grass margins. The approach into the village is equally well cared for and a credit to all concerned. However, it is a pity that cars were parked on the footpath on the SE side of the road – not many, two – but it was not Mass time. It is not to be wondered at that cars park here, given the speed with which passing traffic enters the village. Perhaps, these people could be encouraged to park in the car park or in their own site curtilage, if they are residents? It is also critical that paths be kept free for wheelchair users.

The "Back Road" approach is along a narrow county road downhill into the village. It is a leafy green roadway. However, gates along this roadway could be painted; as indeed could all gates within and adjacent to the village. An open area near the top of the hill, beside an old single storey stone building, could do with a general makeover. A bent sheet metal gate beside a stone wall with some stones falling (beside a residence) was noted. Untidy road edges and lack of repainting on some boundaries was noted.

The entrance to the Silver River Nature Trail off the "Back Road" looked most uninviting, lying as it does between a plaster boundary wall, which needs repainting and a gable wall which also needs repainting. The hedging was good, but lost in the general impression here. The stile and gate area at the end of this lane needed weeding and the gate latch is rusting. Could a traditional gate be provided here instead of a typical tubular farm gate? The entire area gives a poor impression of the beauty beyond.

A road frontage along a residential property on the Kinnitty side also needs tidying.

General Impression:

Cadamstown has a great natural advantage of location and heritage. We know that you are aware of this richness. You are approaching the tasks ahead in an organised manner. We also feel that there is a good community spirit to build upon, and a lot of what makes for success is on-the-ground work. Cadamstown is a lovely village with a community who support the endeavours of the Tidy Towns Group. This is a credit to all concerned. You are shown by the current condition of the village to be hard workers, ever before you put your thoughts on paper! We would encourage you to continue to seek the excellent advice, which is available to you from your Local Authority on many issues – be it Conservation, Heritage, Environmental issues and others. Good luck with all your ventures!

It is a village that many pass through, and possibly few stop in. This is a pity as so much effort has gone into making it what it is. It is a lovely stopping off point and a joy to visit.

One thing this adjudicator would like to see is an emphasis on rationalisation of signage and interpretation, and a simplification visually, and in guidance to the visitor, and a concerted effort not to try to do too much, or the village will become cluttered with effort. Concentrate on retaining distinctive natural features and you will excel!

